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Accidental puppeteer to teach craft overseas

BY KEVIN WALTERS • THE TENNESSEAN • NOVEMBER 18, 2009

[Comments \(0\)](#)[Recommend \(1\)](#)[Print this page](#)[E-mail this article](#)[Share](#)1 | 2 [Next Page](#)**GRASSLAND COMMUNITY** — Kathleen Lynam never set out to make her living with puppets.

Not one for artistic pursuits while growing up, Lynam majored in political science in college. Later, she married and for years was a stay-at-home mother of three children.

But one day the hand of fate intervened. In Lynam's case, the hand of fate happened to be wearing a colorful sock puppet at the time.

Now, after years of honing her puppeteering in Nashville and elsewhere, the longtime Grassland resident will visit Hong Kong next spring as part of a new outreach program of the prestigious Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, based in suburban Washington, D.C.

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Once overseas, Lynam is slated to spend at least a week teaching Asian educators how to make and use their own puppets to help teach disabled and disadvantaged students in their classrooms.

Lynam's hoping her colorful puppets will overcome the cultural and language barriers in China in much the same way they reach the disadvantaged kids she works with in Tennessee.

"I hope I'll be able to give them some new ideas and inspire them," Lynam said. "I want to be a good ambassador."

Work With Puppets Draws Praise

Lynam's reputation and dedication to her craft helped win her the overseas assignment.

A Wolf Trap Master Artist since 2000, she's been working in Metro Nashville for years as part of a program with the Tennessee Performing Arts Center that helps preschool children, primarily in Head Start classrooms, learn life and academic skills. Lynam is also on the national roster of artists with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

"Kathleen has consistently been one of those professionals that takes whatever might be thrown at her and really connects with the teacher and certainly the children," said Mimi Flaherty Willis, senior director of education at Wolf Trap.

A recent performance for kids at the Dudley Head Start Center in Nashville brought smiles and cheers from students as Lynam used her handmade hand puppets to tell stories and teach.

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Four-year-old students watch as puppeteer Kathleen Lynam leads a puppet show at Dudley Head Start in Nashville. (MANDY LUNN / THE TENNESSEAN)



Kids participate in a puppet show with puppeteer Kathleen Lynam.

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